

WISE Report

Legislative Update For Session 2005



from Senator Stephen R. Wise Florida Senator District 5

Kid Care

Florida KidCare is a unique program that provides low-cost health insurance for children in Florida, doubling its enrollment in its first five years of existence from over 800,000 children at the end of its first year in 1998 to over 1.5 million children today. For a child to be eligible for KidCare services, the parents' household income must be under 200% of the federal poverty level (currently around \$37,000 for a family of four). In addition, eligibility is reserved for those whose parents do not have access to health insurance through their employer, or if they do have access they are still eligible if the cost of such coverage for their children exceeds 5 percent of the family's gross income.

Proof of family income must be provided, as well as documentation from an applicant regarding coverage accessibility through an employer's sponsored health insurance plan. Proof of current income is essential to determining program eligibility and maintaining program integrity.

Legislation passed this Session provides for continuous, year-round enrollment in the Florida KidCare program by removing statutory language restricting open enrollment to January and September of each year.

Constitutional Amendment Reform

During this legislative session, lawmakers considered measures aimed not at limiting Floridians' rights to petition government, but at addressing the problematic portions of the current citizen initiative process.

Senate Joint Resolution 6 (passed as HJR 1723) addresses the over abundance of amendments to the constitution by requiring that at least sixty percent of the people voting in an election approve of a measure in order for it to appear in Florida's constitution. This applies to all measures, including those put on the ballot by the Legislature. This will now have to go before the voters to be approved.

Currently, an easily reached simple majority is all that is required and therefore allows almost anything appearing before voters to soon appear written into the constitution. For example, since 1990, 18 of the 20 amendments placed before voters have been written into Florida's constitution.

There were two other measures that passed the Senate, but ultimately were not approved by the House of Representatives, that dealt with constitutional amendment reform. Senate Joint Resolution 4 allowed only those amendments addressing a basic or fundamental right or an article already outlined in the constitution to be amended. Senate Bill 2200 required that two-thirds of those voting on a measure must approve it for it to pass if it authorizes the imposition of new or increased state tax or fee.

Budget

Under the leadership of Senate President Tom Lee and with guidance from Ways and Means Chair Senator Lisa Carlton, the Senate passed a comprehensive and balanced budget. A significant element of the budget maintains a long-term financial outlook in order to make more effective funding decisions in the future.

The budget, which allocates for the Legislature a total of \$63.1 billion to fund services and programs across the state, reflects fiscal responsibility, accountability, and efficiency.

The budget includes a historic \$1.8 billion dollar increase for Florida's education system, an increase of 7.8% over last year's funding.

The budget earmarks \$387.1 million in new General Revenue to implement the new voluntary Pre-K program for 4 year olds and provides for \$35.8 million in additional funding for the Bright Futures program, a 13% increase over last year.



Senator Wise watches Governor Bush sign the Kelsey Ryan Act (SB890)

Other highlights include an appropriation of \$1,146.5 million for Medicaid price level increases in reimbursement rates for institutional facilities, rural health clinics, federally qualified health centers, county health departments, prescription drugs, and other services, as well as \$725.9 million to fund Florida's Medicaid workload increase.

Other Medicaid funding increases includes:

- Restored Medically Needy Program - \$393.3 Million
- Restored Medical Services to an estimated 36,000 people
- Restored Medical Coverage for Adult Dentures - \$20.7 Million
- Restored Medicaid Pregnant Women with Incomes between 150-185% of the federal poverty level - \$60.8 Million

Some select additional appropriations include \$73.3 million for beach restoration, \$23.3 million for an estimated increase in Florida's prison population, and \$13 million for Hurricane Shelters and Emergency Operations Centers.

Session Review For Senator Wise *Legislation that passed the Senate, the House and signed by the Governor*

- SB 434 Individual/Disability/Service Animal
- SB 468 Motor Vehicle Driving Privilege/DUI
- SB 530 DUI/Ignition Interlock Device
- SB 638 Title Insurance, Substituted for House Bill 75
- SB 720 Health Care (Personal Care Attendant)
- SB 752 Ms. Willie Ann Glenn Act (Summer Nutrition Act), Substituted for House Bill 227
- SB 758 Child Protective Investigations (Administrative Hearings)
- SB 890 Students/Administering Epinephrine
- SB 1250 Independent Postsecondary Education
- SB 1272 Independent Education/Public Records
- SB 1438 Repossession Services
- SB 1468 OPPAGA Director/Gary VanLandingham
- SB 1746 Capitol Police, Substituted for House Bill 345
- SB 2550 Assisted Technology Devices/Services

Criminal Justice Committee Bills That Passed

- Senate Bill 1216 (Senator Argenzino) "The Jessica Lunsford Act" - High-Risk Offenders
- SB 1440 from Criminal Justice Committee - Time Limitations/Criminal Offenses

Senate Bills & Amendments Whose Language Was Placed In Other Legislation

- Re-designation of the FL Special Olympic License Plate as the "Special Olympics of FL" License Plate
- Attestation Language for Choose Life License Plate
- Clay County Commissioner Pat McGovern's auditing language
- DUI/Invalidate Driver's License Administrative Suspension if person is not found guilty at trial
- Motor Vehicle Service Agreement
- Juvenile Justice/Staff Workgroup Studies



Total Funding for the Four Counties in Senate District 5

Clay County.....	\$210,012,894
Duval County.....	\$1,106,246,431
Nassau County.....	\$77,755,957
St. Johns County....	\$177,041,101
Total	\$1,571,056,383

HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING

Florida Community College of Jacksonville	\$109,437,046
University of North Florida	\$97,917,880
Edward Waters College	\$3,185,332

OFFICE INFORMATION

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